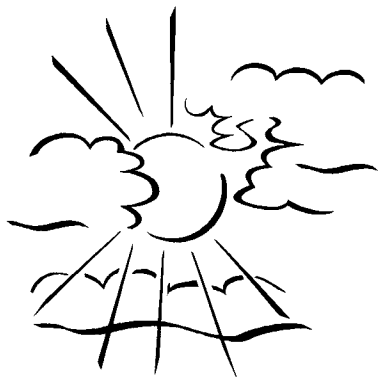


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Thursday, February 23, 2006

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Lansing State Journal

February 23, 2006

Prosecutor challenges media ruling

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III has appealed a judge's decision that allowed the State Journal and WILX-TV access to testimony provided in closed court. The decision involved Feb. 7 testimony by an Ingham County sheriff's detective revealing that Tim Holland told investigators his wife killed their 7-year-old adopted son Ricky.

District Judge Rosemarie Aquilina ordered the transcript be made public after another judge had suppressed it. Even though the information has already been released, Dunnings said he filed the appeal Tuesday in Circuit Court to avoid setting a precedent.

"I think the press provides an invaluable service," he said, "but (freedom of the press) doesn't mean everything, all the time."

Some of the information provided during the hearing, which led to murder charges being filed against the Hollands, will not be admissible at trial, Dunnings said, and he didn't want it released, potentially tainting the jury pool. Dunnings added he has sought to suppress similar testimony only about three times since he became prosecutor in 1997. It is not clear when the Circuit Court will rule.

Father sentenced to prison for abuse of his infant children

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION Thursday, February 23, 2006

By Paul Janczewski

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A judge said even though Carleton O. Grant had the biological ability to become a parent, "he wasn't (one)" because of the physical abuse he made him sentenced Grant, 24, of Flint to 7-15 years in prison for first-degree child abuse. is two children endure.

Genesee Circuit Judge Richard B. Yuille then sentenced

Grant earlier had pleaded guilty in assaults on his 3-month-old son in 2000 and on his 5-week-old son in July.

In both cases, Grant told Yuille the attacks occurred after Grant argued with the children's mother, when he violently shook the children before slamming them down on a couch.

At sentencing, Grant apologized and admitted he was wrong.

"I just want to learn from this," he said.

Yuille said one of the children still requires medications, and may for the rest of his life after suffering from shaken baby syndrome.

Both have somewhat recovered from their injuries and now are in foster care, officials said.

Grant and Chanel McMillian, the children's mother, had four children.

Protective Services have removed all four from the couple, who lost parental rights after Probate Court proceedings.

Jacarion Grant, 5 weeks old, was admitted July 4 to Hurley Medical Center in critical condition.

Police said the infant had a swollen face, bleeding on his brain in three locations, a fractured wrist and six fractured ribs.

Grant told Flint Police Sgt. Jowanne Carrigan he had a problem with anger and "went too far" with Jacarion. He showed her how he held the child, shook and slapped him, raking his fingernails across the boy's face causing several scratches.

He also said he struck the infant in the head with a thrown baby bottle.

During that interview, Grant also told Carrigan about a Nov. 25, 2000, incident with his then-3-month-old son, Kentrell McMillian.

Police had investigated the abuse, but no charges were filed. Charges were filed after the interview with Carrigan.

Jacarion was released from the hospital about a week after the injuries, police said. No information about Kentrell's injuries were available.

Mother charged in baby's drowning

Warren woman faces manslaughter, says it was accident

PUBLISHED: February 23, 2006

By Norb Franz
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 25-year-old Warren woman has been charged with involuntary manslaughter in the drowning of her infant daughter.

Angela Marie McClellan was arraigned Tuesday via video hookup between the Warren Police Department lockup and the 37th District Court.

McClellan's daughter, Victoria, died Dec. 21, eight days after Warren paramedics revived the 4-month-old girl in her home at the Eckerts Trailer Park on 11 Mile Road.

Investigators at the time reported the child's mother told police she was giving the girl a bath and left the room to get clothes for the baby. She said when she returned to the adult-sized bathtub approximately five minutes later, the infant was face-down in a few inches of water.

A fire department spokesman said the child was purple, had no pulse and was not breathing as emergency personnel arrived. Paramedics immediately began CPR and continued the life-saving effort on the way to St. John Macomb Hospital in Warren.

Victoria was transferred to St. John Hospital, Detroit, where she remained in critical condition and breathing with the assistance of a ventilator until her death, police said.

McClellan was the only other person in the home at the time of the incident, and claimed it was an accident, detectives said. Officials did not say why they suspect the mother.

A preliminary hearing in the case is scheduled for March 2.

Following her arraignment, McClellan initially was jailed in lieu of \$25,000 cash or surety bond set by District Judge Jennifer Faunce. She was released from the Macomb County Jail on Wednesday.

A manslaughter charge involves a death resulting from gross negligence. Upon conviction, it carries a prison term of up to 15 years.

Wayne County

Dad charged with child abuse

Taylor cops say he shook 4-month-old

February 23, 2006

BY JOEL THURTELL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITE

The father of a 4-month-old Taylor boy faces a first-degree child abuse charge after police say he shook his son.

Preance Du'vall Weaver, 18, of Taylor and Detroit is being held in the Wayne County Jail. He was arraigned Feb. 12 in 34th District Court in Romulus and failed to post bond. A date for a preliminary exam has not been scheduled, said Taylor police Detective Joel Kaczor.

Weaver's attorney, Sheldon Halpern, was not available for comment Wednesday.

According to a police report, the baby's mother, Megan Perry, 19, went out to dinner Feb. 8 with two aunts. She then went to an Arby's to buy dinner for Weaver. While she was gone, she left her son in Weaver's care.

When she returned to their home in the 2600 block of Gary Street in Taylor, she found the baby's body limp, his eyes half-shut and making a gurgling sound.

She told Weaver to call 911. He made the call and left the home. She told police that he was carrying a plate full of marijuana when he left.

The infant was taken to Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn, where a CAT scan showed bleeding in the infant's brain, according to a police report.

"The injuries to the victim are consistent with the baby being shaken," a doctor told police.

The baby was transferred to Children's Hospital in Detroit, where he was placed in the intensive care unit.

Since then, the baby has been released from the hospital and remains in his mother's care, Kaczor said.

Weaver was arrested Feb. 10 when he appeared at an appointment with Child Protective Services agents. In addition to the first-degree child abuse charge, he also faces a misdemeanor marijuana possession charge.

Contact **JOEL THURTELL** at 248-351-3296 or thurtell@freepress.com.

Jury selection begins in Donna Yost murder trial

Thursday, February 23, 2006

By CRYSTAL HARMON
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Bay County Circuit Judge William J. Caprathe has begun the unusually arduous task of seating a jury to hear the murder case against Donna A. Yost.

Yost, 46, who now lives in Pinconning, is charged with an open count of murder stemming from the Oct. 10, 1999, drug-overdose death of her daughter, Monique, in their Bay City home. An autopsy showed that Monique, who was 7 years old at the time, consumed a fatal dose of the anti-depressant Imipramine.

Yost was charged five months later, but a series of conflicting court decisions have delayed her trial. Yost has been out of jail on her own recognizance since the summer of 2000, after a district judge ruled that there was no evidence of a crime.

Seventy-four potential jurors reported to court on Wednesday, and, in an unusual move, were being questioned one-by-one to determine if they'd be included in the jury pool, from which 16 jurors will be selected, with four of those serving as alternates.

The judge was screening potential jurors, dismissing some from the pool, after posing a series of questions about exposure to trial coverage and any personal experience with child abuse or suicide.

With the case having received substantial media coverage, several potential jurors were excused after telling the judge that they have already made up their minds about Donna's role in Monique's death.

"I think she's guilty, if I can say that," one man told the judge, saying that he and his wife discussed the case often since first seeing news reports of the death in 1999.

But another woman, who also said she's been following the case through news accounts, reached a different conclusion.

"I've had two suicides in my family, and my sympathies right now are with Mrs. Yost," she said. Yost, dressed in black, sat at the defense table with her attorney, Edward M. Czuprynski, and a jury consultant hired to assist with the selection of the panel.

Bay County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Kurt Asbury and Assistant Prosecutor Nancy Borushko are prosecuting the case.

John J. Alleva, a field producer from Court TV, attended the proceedings. No attorneys in the case have objected to the network's plan to record the proceedings for possible future airing, but the judge barred filming of the jury-screening process.

Jury selection was to continue today, with another batch of potential jurors ordered to report for duty.

The trial is expected to last several weeks.

Czuprynski contends that Yost is innocent, and that Monique died either by suicide or accident.

- Crystal Harmon covers consumer affairs for The Times. She may be reached at 894-9643 or by e-mail at charmon@bc-times.com.

Bill exempts list of school workers from FOIA for 14 days

2/22/2006, 7:16 p.m. ET

By DAVID EGGERT
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The state House unanimously approved a bill Wednesday that would give school districts more time before releasing the names of workers with criminal records. The bill, which passed 105-0, next heads to the Senate.

A new law targeting sex offenders prompted the state to check the criminal histories of more than 200,000 school employees, resulting in a list sent to districts by the state Department of Education.

But in recent weeks, federal and state judges have blocked the state from making the list public. Teachers' unions and other critics said it was riddled with inaccuracies that could harm the reputations of innocent workers or even cost them their jobs.

Some of the people wrongly listed may have matched people with similar names, while others might have been victims of stolen Social Security numbers, officials said. The state has recalled the list and is working to send schools a more accurate version in March.

Bill sponsor Rep. Rick Baxter, R-Concord, said school officials need more time to verify names received from the state. His bill would exempt the list from Freedom of Information Act requests for 14 days.

"By no means do we want to lessen our ability to keep convicted criminals away from kids, but teachers should have the opportunity to make sure they are not falsely accused," Baxter said.

Republicans have shifted their stance since proposing the bill in early February. They originally wanted to force disclosure of the list under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. But the bill now doesn't specifically require its release.

Republicans said they are confident that courts will rule the list should be made public.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Michigan Department of Education: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde>

Michigan Education Association: <http://www.mea.org>

Published February 23, 2006

Highfields sends kids home, halts program Judges, directors to meet today to discuss concerns

By T.M. Shultz
Lansing State Journal

The first face-to-face meeting between Ingham County judges and Highfields leaders is set for today, one day after facility officials announced they had suspended residential treatment programs and sent remaining youngsters home.

The Family Court judges earlier this month pulled 18 court-ordered youths from the Onondaga facility, which is licensed to treat boys ages 12 to 17 who have run into trouble.

"I guarantee you it will be interesting," presiding Family Court Judge Janelle Lawless said of the meeting. The judges removed their teenage charges after they learned of a second accusation of mistreatment at the facility in three weeks.

That accusation resulted in two Highfields employees being fired this week.

It's unclear whether Highfields officials are investigating the first accusation, which involves a boy claiming he was harassed by other boys. Lawless said she received hand-delivered results Wednesday afternoon of Highfields' investigation into the second incident but has not gotten any information from Highfields on the disposition of the first incident.

One mother's story

Janice Pinder of Lansing said her son was 14 when he entered Highfields' residential treatment program last summer after being repeatedly sent home from school for disruptive behavior. She says that during the five months he was there, he claimed an employee restrained him with a knee to his throat, pulled his arm so far behind his back that it still hurts and gave him rug burns on the side of his face - burns Pinder said she saw when she visited him.

"They said that's how they restrain them," Pinder said she was told when she complained to officials there. "It mentally affected him. He's got a lot of anger. Now he says he's never gonna let anybody put their hands on him again."

And that, says presiding Judge Janelle Lawless, is the problem. She says kids who are treated violently will relate violently to the world around them. Court officials say the boy's allegations are being investigated.

3 teens charged with assault

Two face robbery, kidnap charges

Thursday, February 23, 2006

BY AMALIE NASH

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Three Ann Arbor teenagers are accused of severely beating a couple, robbing them at gunpoint, stealing their car and abandoning them along a roadway outside the city this month during a drug deal gone bad.

The three teens appeared in Washtenaw County 14-A District Court Wednesday.

Accused of dealing drugs, Thurman Taylor, 17, faces 12 felony charges in connection with the Feb. 11 incident. The charges include two counts apiece of kidnapping and conspiracy to commit kidnapping; one count apiece of assault with intent to rob while armed, carjacking, conspiracy to commit carjacking, armed robbery, conspiracy to commit armed robbery; two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon; and one count of using a weapon to commit a felony.

Justin Graulich, 15, is charged as an adult with the same 12 counts.

Bricion Patterson, 17, was charged with armed robbery, conspiracy to commit armed robbery, assault with intent to rob while armed, two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon, and using a weapon to commit a felony.

Police reports say the incident began when a 17-year-old girl who knew Taylor through Pioneer High School, where they both were students, called him to ask if he had marijuana to sell to another acquaintance. The teen helped to broker a drug deal between Taylor and another man, and she asked a 22-year-old male co-worker for a ride to meet up with the two parties, police said.

They all met at a local bowling alley to make the transaction, police said. But the teen and co-worker said the buyer suddenly grabbed the drugs and ran without paying, reports said. Taylor gave chase but was unable to catch him, so he ordered the couple to drive him to an apartment, reports said.

The 17-year-old woman told police she was ordered to follow Taylor inside, where she was shoved into a bathroom and beaten with fists and a gun by Taylor and two other men, police reports said. She said Patterson pointed a loaded gun to her head and threatened to kill her, and the men ran water in the bathtub and tried to force her head under the faucet, reports said.

The 22-year-old co-worker said he was waiting in his car when two men approached him and told him to come inside, where he was also badly beaten and ordered to help pay off the cost of the lost drugs, reports said. The couple said the man who stole the drugs had agreed to pay \$1,500.

Detective William Stanford said the man who reportedly stole the drugs - estimated at a pound of marijuana - still has not been identified.

"They had very noticeable injuries from the beating," Stanford said. "The male victim didn't really have anything to do with the drug setup and unfortunately was dragged into the situation."

Police said the 22-year-old victim was forced to drive to an ATM to withdraw money, and he and the woman were later driven by two of the men to the area of State Road and Morgan Road.

The couple was left there and pushed into a snow bank, and the two men drove away in the male victim's car. It was later found in Pittsfield Township, Stanford said.

The victims didn't report the incident to police until the following day. The male victim took detectives to the apartment on Packard Street where they were beaten, police said. As detectives knocked on the door, the men inside tossed two loaded handguns and a small amount of marijuana out of a window, Stanford said.

Police arrested Taylor, Patterson and Graulich in the apartment. Graulich's 14-year-old and 9-year-old brothers also were in the apartment, where a box of ammunition was sitting on a table, police said.

The two 17-year-olds remain lodged at the Washtenaw County Jail on \$250,000 bond, and Graulich is in juvenile detention.

Graulich waived his right to a preliminary hearing Wednesday and was bound over to Washtenaw County Circuit Court. The hearings for Taylor and Patterson were adjourned until March 8. Several of the charges are punishable by up to life in prison.

The incident marked at least the third recent violent crime associated with an alleged drug deal in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti. On Sunday evening, an 18-year-old Belleville man was shot to death in Ypsilanti Township; police said he was killed when at least five men showed up to rob him of drugs. The same weekend that the couple was beaten and robbed, a Dexter teen sustained a minor gunshot wound and an acquaintance was beaten during a confrontation over an apparent drug deal on Ann Arbor's west side.

Amalie Nash can be reached at anash@annarbornnews.com or 734-994-6832.

Officials hope fewer Medicare Rx problems will mean more enrollees

Thursday, February 23, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- More than 400,000 Michigan seniors have signed up for the new Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, but some 600,000 apparently have yet to be convinced. About 40,000 Michigan seniors enrolled between Jan. 16 and Feb. 13, joining those who have enrolled since Nov. 15, according to data released Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Steve Gools, executive of the Michigan chapter of the AARP, said the numbers reflect "highly effective outreach efforts." But, he added, "They also underscore why we must remain focused on effective, consumer-friendly implementation of Medicare Rx."

Medicare Part D, which took effect Jan. 1, offsets drug costs for seniors and requires some co-payments, deductibles and premiums of about \$25 a month.

Medicare beneficiaries in Michigan have 41 plans from 18 different insurance companies to choose from. The plans are overseen by the federal government but administered by private companies.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt said Wednesday he expects enrollment to grow faster now that problems during Part D's first few weeks of operation have been resolved.

"Enrollments are up, prices are down," said Leavitt. "The system is working better every day." Nationally, about 4.9 million seniors have signed up for the plans and another 10.9 million were automatically enrolled because they are part of a Medicare health maintenance organization or they are so-called dual-eligibles, people who qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid.

Some health advocacy groups say the Bush administration hasn't moved aggressively enough to enroll low-income seniors.

"Only a meager 4.9 million seniors now have drug coverage who didn't have it before," said Ron Pollack from Families USA, a national group. "Perhaps most tragically, only a tiny fraction of the low-income seniors who could most benefit from the new program are now receiving drug coverage."

In Michigan, 195,214 seniors have signed up for stand-alone drug plans since enrollment began, and another 190,062 were automatically enrolled because they are dual-eligibles. About 29,000 seniors also are enrolled in drug plans through Medicare Advantage, Medicare's managed care program.

Some 500,000 of Michigan's 1.5 million seniors receive drug coverage through former employer plans or through other federal retiree systems.

"The enrollment numbers for the new Medicare prescription drug program are inflated and misleading," said Michigan U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow. "This is just one more indication that the drug benefit is not working as it was intended or as it is being portrayed."

HHS officials say the numbers are accurate.

Many Democrats are in their districts surveying seniors on how well the program is working, including Sen. Carl Levin, who is in Saginaw and Flint today. Levin has been critical of the drug plans, and he and Stabenow have recommended changes, such as extending the May 15 enrollment deadline or allowing seniors more opportunities to switch plans.

To avoid enrollment problems, Leavitt encouraged seniors to sign up by the middle of the month. "People who enroll late (in the month) or change plans late are the group having the most difficulty when they go to the pharmaceutical counter for the first time," said Leavitt. "We recommend they (enroll) before the 15th of the month. That way the system has a chance to be updated."

Michigan residents having problems with Part D are encouraged to call a new toll-free hot line and e-mail address set up by the Mental Health Association in Michigan.

All Medicare beneficiaries, not just those with mental health conditions, can lodge their complaints at the Medicare Part D Information Pipeline, (866) 779-1359, or e-mail partdmha@aol.com. The phone line will be staffed Wednesdays from 12:30 p.m.-4 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Voice messages can be left at any time.

The group won't be solving callers' problems, said Executive Director Mark Reinstein, but rather cataloging complaints over the next six months with the idea of submitting them to federal officials and encouraging them to revamp the system accordingly.

"We've always been concerned about how this program would work, especially in terms of the dual-eligibles, who are a substantial portion of our constituents," Reinstein said. "... The program is just too difficult for a lot of people to deal with."

PUBLISHED: Thursday, February 23, 2006

Levin promises Medicare drug plan fixes

Senator says he introduced bill to help repair senior prescription problems

By MARK RANZENBERGER
Sun Staff Writer

Sen. Carl Levin told mid-Michigan senior citizens Wednesday that he expects Congress to change the new prescription-drug plan for seniors, but it could be months before that happens. "A lot of my colleagues who voted for this are getting a lot of heat from the grassroots," said Levin, D-Mich., at a forum at the Isabella County Commission on Aging in Mt. Pleasant. Levin also spoke to senior citizens in Farwell Wednesday.

"It's monstrously confusing, frustrating," Levin said. "There are a lot of people who are angry, justifiably angry."

He said the Medicare Part D program's launch was marred by massive problems, and he hopes that those will be fixed.

"You still have structural problems in the program," he said. He has introduced legislation that he hopes will fix some of those problems.

Levin's bill would permit drug companies to offer discounts to low-income seniors, prohibit prescription drug plans from removing covered medications from its list of covered drugs for a year, waive copayments for former Medicaid recipients and allow the government to negotiate prices with drug companies.

"Medicare is prohibited with negotiating with the pharmaceutical companies," Levin said. "The law, as far as I'm concerned, was written largely by the pharmaceutical companies and the insurance companies."

Susan Schiller of Mt. Pleasant told Levin she was worried about her parents' drug coverage. She said her 87-year-old mother's medication had once been covered by a state-funded plan, but that ended with the introduction of Medicare Part D.

Schiller said her mother was dismayed by hefty copays.

"She's already deciding not to take some medications because they cost too much," Schiller said. At the same time, her father is considering not signing up for Medicare Part D at all, because the premiums would cost more than his out-of-pocket cost for his medications.

Levin said that before the start of Medicare Part D, "a majority of the American senior citizens had prescription drug coverage," through Medicaid, their former employers or some other means, such as discount cards or state programs. Still, that left millions of people without coverage.

Levin said Medicare Part D was better than no coverage at all, but for many people who had coverage before, he said, "this will be a negative, rather than a positive."

He said he was afraid more companies, facing financial pressure, would pull prescription coverage for their retirees.

"The Medicare program is almost never as good as what they had before," Levin said.

Brenda McEachern of Mt. Pleasant told Levin she was a caregiver for an elderly dia-betic patient. McEachern said she was baffled and confused by one of the requirements of the Medicare Part D plan to which her patient was as-signed.

"One item was reclassified from being a pharmaceutical to being a medical supply - insu-lin syringes," McEachern said. The insurance company pro-viding the coverage said it would pay for the syringes, but only if they were purchased from a medical supply house, not a pharmacy. But McEachern said medical supply houses don't carry the syringes - pharmacies do. She said the Catch-22 situation has made her angry and frustrated.

"There's so much anger out there, something's going to happen," Levin said. "The sna-fus at the startup were just unconscionable."

Levin said he would have supported a purely govern-ment-run prescription drug program, but the political will to establish that wasn't there. Medicare Part D is a govern-ment-funded series of plans that involve private insurers.

"We don't have a Medicare program," he said. "We have a marketplace out there."

Levin: Most should sign up for flawed Medicare drug plan

Stuart Frohm, Midland Daily News

02/23/2006

Sen. Carl Levin thinks lawmakers might improve the Medicare prescription drug program this year.

But don't wait for that, Levin told senior citizens in Midland Wednesday. Most senior citizens without prescription coverage should sign up for it under Medicare's program, Levin said.

He saluted Midland County Senior Services and other programs that help senior citizens decide which of the dozens of prescription drug programs is best for them.

Military veterans and some retirees and their spouses might be getting a better deal than they would from the Medicare prescription drug program, Levin said.

Low-income Medicaid recipients and some others also got a better deal before lawmakers added the prescription drug benefit to Medicare, he added.

Levin voted against the Medicare prescription drug program because of what he considers its shortcomings. He and Debbie Stabenow, Michigan's other Democratic senator, are two of the lawmakers trying to change the law.

A proposal that's the most likely to become law is extension of the May 15, penalty-free enrollment deadline, Levin said.

His and Stabenow's proposed Senate Bill 2240 would:

- * Specify that there will be no negative consequences to pharmaceutical companies that provide discount cards to lower-income seniors.

- * Prohibit insurance companies from removing drugs from their Medicare plans' lists of covered drugs until January 1 of the following year. That would give seniors the chance to change plans during open enrollment periods.

- * Waive copayments for people who were moved from Medicaid into the Medicare prescription drug program.

- * Allow the federal government to use its bargaining power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.

Levin spoke to about 35 people and answered questions from some of them at Midland County Senior Services' office, 4700 Dublin Ave.

He has held such sessions elsewhere in Michigan. His office reported it has been inundated with calls, letters and e-mail from people across Michigan voicing concerns about inadequacies of the Medicare prescription drug program since it went into effect in January.

Midland County Senior Services -- which reportedly has helped more than 2,000 people regarding the Medicare drug program since October -- can be reached by telephone at 633-3700.

Walk to help with heating bills

Tony Lascari, Midland Daily News

02/23/2006

People can walk Saturday to help their neighbors pay heating bills during Walk for Warmth at Midland High School.

Christie Waldie, outreach coordinator for the MidMichigan Community Action Agency of Midland County, said many Midlanders now can relate to community members struggling to pay bills.

"The recent storm gave many of us a brief glimpse of what it's like to live without heat," she said.

Increased energy bills snap people's overstretched budgets, and the walk aims to ease the burden by raising funds to help pay bills, Waldie said.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. Saturday at Midland High School, 1301 Eastlawn Drive. Sheets to raise funds during the walk are available at the agency's office, 521 Washington St.

Alice Sharron Such, walk committee member, wrote a letter to the City of Midland to get Saturday named as Walk for Warmth Day.

"Some of our neighbors have a difficult time just trying to make ends meet, and when the furnace breaks down or the gas is shut off, they don't know where to turn for extra money needed to the care of their emergency," she said. "One hundred percent of all funds raised for Walk for Warmth will go to help Midland County residents with any heat related emergency they may have."

Waldie said the walk started with one man who wanted to help those in need.

"In the past 20 years the Walk for Warmth has grown tremendously," she said.

There are several walks planned for Saturday around the state, including at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Gladwin, 211 E. Cedar Ave.

Walkers shore up coffers to help pay heating costs

Thursday, February 23, 2006

By Greg Chandler
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Tina was facing the prospect of having the natural gas shut off to her Park Township home last month.

Already dealing with the difficulties of raising a teenage son on her own after the sudden death of her husband last summer, she had a \$400 heating bill that she could not pay. A Social Security check was on its way, but would not arrive until four days after the gas was to be shut off. Desperate, Tina called the Ottawa County Community Action Agency to see if it could help her. The agency stepped in and provided the money she needed through its emergency utility assistance program.

"I don't even want to think about what would have happened (if CAA had not been there to help)," said Tina, who asked that her last name not be used. "The people there were awesome." Stories such as Tina's have been commonplace this winter as heating costs have reached an all-time high. Local agencies such as CAA are struggling to assist those who need help in paying their bills to avoid having their heat shut off.

"The need (for assistance) has been higher, and what we're able to offer is less per household (than in previous winters)," said Rae Lynn Hooley, fund development coordinator for CAA. "We'd like to correct that."

Area residents can help the county take a step in that direction Saturday by participating in the 16th annual Walk for Warmth, which will start from the Holland Civic Center. Organizers have set an ambitious goal for this year's walk, hoping to raise \$30,000 for emergency utility assistance, twice the amount usually raised at past walks.

CAA found itself in an awkward situation last fall. From Oct. 1 through mid-November, the agency had to turn away 72 people who sought assistance with their utility bills because they had no funds available, Hooley said.

Since then, the agency has received additional funding and been able to assist 260 families. Last year, CAA spent \$138,000 on utility assistance, with nearly 800 families receiving help with their bills, Hooley said.

CAA already has gotten a head start on raising funds for Walk for Warmth. Corporate supporters already have raised about \$9,000 for the event, and cookbooks were being sold today at a "cook-off" at the county building in Grand Haven, with proceeds going to the walk, Hooley said.

All funds raised at Walk for Warmth will be matched by the Michigan Community Action Agency through a grant from the Michigan Public Service Commission, Hooley said.

Interested walkers may sign up online and download a pledge sheet at miOttawa.org/caa or call CAA at (616) 393-5615.

More in U.S. turn to soup kitchens for aid

Largest food bank network assisted 25 million in 2005

By **STEPHEN OHLEMACHER**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When Lisa Koch asked several people at a Chicago soup kitchen to complete a survey of the people who eat there, she got a surprising response: "They asked how long it would take because they had to get back to work after lunch."

A national survey of people eating at soup kitchens, food banks and shelters found that 36 percent came from households in which at

least one person had a job. In the Chicago area, it was 39 percent.

"Even though the economy might be changing, it isn't creating the kinds of jobs that allow people to make ends meet," said Koch of the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

More than 25 million Americans turned to the nation's largest network of food banks, soup kitchens and shelters for meals last year, up 9 percent from 2001, says the report by America's Second Harvest.

Those seeking food included 9 million children and nearly 3 million senior citizens, the report says.

"The face of hunger doesn't have a particular color, and it doesn't come from a particular neighborhood," said Ertharin Cousin, ex-

ecutive vice president of America's Second Harvest. "They are your neighbors, they are working Americans, they are senior citizens who have worked their entire lives, and they are children."

The organization said it interviewed 52,000 people at food banks, soup kitchens and shelters across the country last year. The network represents about 39,000 hunger-relief organizations, or

about 80 percent of those in the United States. The vast majority are run locally by churches and private nonprofit groups.

The surveys were done before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast in 2005. After the hurricanes, demand for emergency food assistance tripled in Gulf Coast states, according to a separate report by the group.

The new report, being released today, found that 35 percent of people seeking food came from households that received food stamps. Cousin said the numbers show that the government program, while important, is insufficient.

"The benefits they are receiving are not enough," Cousin said.

Government reports also show the number of hungry Americans

increasing.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture report released last year said 13.5 million American households, or nearly 12 percent, had difficulty providing enough food for family members at some time in 2004. That's up from 11 percent in '03.

Jean Daniel, a USDA spokeswoman, said private groups play an important role in supplementing the government's safety net.

Some local food-assistance groups saw big jumps in the number of people seeking food, despite an improving economy.

In Washington, the Capital Area Food Bank served more than 383,000 people last year, a 39 percent increase over 2001, said Kasandra Gunter Robinson, the food bank's spokeswoman.

Millions seek emergency food assistance

America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest network of food banks, soup kitchens and shelters, served 25.3 million people last year, a 9 percent increase from 2001. Here are some of the characteristics of those seeking emergency food assistance:

- ▶ **Thirty-nine percent were white,** non-Hispanic; 38 percent were black; 17 percent were Hispanic.
 - ▶ **About 9 million** were children.
 - ▶ **Nearly 3 million** were 65 or older.
 - ▶ **Nearly 70 percent** had incomes below the official poverty level, which is \$15,067 for a family of three.
 - ▶ **Twelve percent** were homeless.
 - ▶ **Forty-one percent** said they have had to choose between buying food or paying for utilities.
 - ▶ **About a third** said they had to choose between buying food or paying for medicine or medical care.
 - ▶ **Nearly 30 percent** had at least one family member in poor health.
-

February 22, 2006

Housing waiting list opens for residents

by MICHAEL NEARY

neary@monroenews.com

By early Tuesday afternoon, Section 8 workers had a stack of applications 162 deep and a broken photocopier on their hands — the remnants of a massive response to the county's reopening of the federal housing voucher waiting list.

Tuesday marked the first time the county had opened its Sec-

tion 8 waiting list since 2002, as program administrators distributed and collected applications at the Michigan Department of Human Resources at 1051 S. Telegraph Rd. Cheryl Sicuso, a housing agent for Housing Assistance Management in Monroe County, said she expected about 50 new vouchers to become available in the summer.

The Section 8 program allows residents to pay a portion of

their rent to participating landlords through a federally funded voucher.

"I'm a single mom with twins," said Alicia Monday, who works full time as a teller but struggles with money to pay rent. She said her salary was just high enough to place her beyond the range of most financial assistance programs, but not high enough for

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Housing (cont.)

her to manage housing, food and car expenses. She said selling her car was not an option.

"You have to have something reliable to get to and from work," she said.

County administrators of the Section 8 program said Ms. Monday's situation was not unusual, at least among the applicants they'd seen Tuesday.

"A lot of them are working — they're just low income," said Mrs. Sicuso.

The gap between rent costs and a modest full-time wage is something that housing experts have repeatedly stressed, both in Michigan and throughout the country.

"If you're working a minimum-wage job you cannot afford a one-bedroom (apart-

ment), let alone a car," said a representative for the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a national organization.

By noon the rush of applicants had ebbed, according to the staff. And because applicants will be drawn from the waiting list by lottery, the order of arrival is ultimately irrelevant.

Staff members said the mood stayed upbeat even when the rush was at its height. One man who came to fill out an application stayed for nearly an hour helping to direct customer traffic when it was at its height. Staff members said they thought, for a moment, that he was a volunteer and later dubbed him the "mystery man."

"I wish he would have stayed because I would have bought him lunch," said Andrea Clark, an inspector for

Housing Assistance Management.

But if the mood was upbeat, many of the stories the residents told Tuesday afternoon were not. One of the applicants said he had been trying to piece together rent from Social Security and was running out of time and money.

"My limited income of Social Security makes it hard to pay rent," said a 64-year-old man who identified himself as Michael. "... I had to sell my house three years ago, and now the money has run out."

Health trouble had also touched some of the applicants and their family members.

"This is the first time I ever signed up for Section 8," said 36-year-old Tammy Mendenhall. "I always did everything on my own."

Ms. Mendenhall said she had a son under hospice care and was looking to move out of her apartment and into a house to gain more privacy.

Program administrators stressed that potential applicants must bring copies of identification proving they are Monroe residents to be under primary consideration. That category includes homeless shelter residents, as well as people staying with family in the county — but the residency must be documented.

The office will be open for applications from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Thursday. The county will accept applications until March 6, but after Thursday they must be submitted through the mail. Those interested in more information may call 241-6364.

Cop fired for roughing up 94-year-old

Thursday, February 23, 2006

By Lisa Medendorp

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A Muskegon police officer whose "manhandling" injured a 94-year-old man last week has been fired for using excessive force.

Muskegon Director of Public Safety Tony Kleibecker said Wednesday that he "terminated" Scott Hepworth, who has been a patrol officer for four years, after reviewing the results of an internal investigation.

The elderly man, Darl Staley, was injured on Feb. 16 while trying to help his neighbors during the ice storm that struck the area.

Staley suffered a broken elbow, extensive bruising and lacerations to both wrists. He was forcibly taken to the ground by Hepworth and handcuffed during the incident. Hepworth wrote in his report of the incident he "felt threatened" by Staley.

Kleibecker personally went to Staley's home Wednesday to inform him of the decision. "I think he's contented with what happened," Staley's friend, Muriel Farr, said afterward, referring to the director's decision.

Staley is "doing pretty good," she said, "but he's still in a lot of pain and his arm is still badly swollen."

She said they've had a lot of visitors since the incident became public, and there has been "a lot of outrage" in the community.

In firing Hepworth, Kleibecker said the officer's actions "are not reflective of this department and applications of unreasonable force will not be tolerated."

Hepworth, who stands about 6-foot-3 and weighs approximately 240 pounds, had written in his report that Staley, 5-8 and 162 pounds, had been pointing his finger at him during a verbal exchange, Kleibecker said. At no time did he touch the officer.

Kleibecker said the officer "failed to maintain self-control" and applied an unreasonable level of force against Staley.

Police officers are trained to respond to a scene, assess the situation and take all factors into account, Kleibecker said. "This did not happen here."

Hepworth "did not take into account that Mr. Staley was elderly, had a difficult time hearing, and with what was taking place, in all likelihood may have been confused," Kleibecker said.

"At no time was Mr. Staley ever a threat to this officer," Kleibecker said. "The officer clearly overreacted."

Patrol Officer Michael Addicott, union representative for the Police Officers Labor Council, said the filing of a grievance is automatic in the case of a termination. He said attorneys for the union and Hepworth have yet to be able to review all of the material gathered during the internal investigation that began Friday.

"All members of the department certainly wish a quick and complete recovery to Mr. Staley," Addicott said. "We handle tens of thousands of calls every year, and both the union and the administration want the citizens to feel absolutely confident in their police department."

"It's tragic how this turned out both for Mr. Staley and for Officer Hepworth and his career here," Addicott said.

Kleibecker said there was no prior record of disciplinary action against Hepworth, and that no criminal charges are being sought against him as there was no intent to harm involved. Addicott also said it was the union's understanding that the matter had not been referred either to the city attorney or the Muskegon County Prosecutor's Office.

During the internal investigation, "we interviewed everybody affiliated with this," Kleibecker said, including police officers, firefighters, Staley and his neighbors. Also reviewed during the investigation was the officer's audio recording of the incident.

The incident began shortly before 5 p.m. when Hepworth went to the home of Carl and Pat Lipton, 2245 Resort, to check for a possible fire after a tree branch came down in the storm and caused a power outage.

At the time, the Muskegon Fire Department was getting call after call because of the storm, and Hepworth was trying to help out. There was no fire, just the smell of burning insulation on electrical wiring and a light smoky haze. Hepworth was trying to get everyone out of the house, Kleibecker said.

Staley, who lives behind the Liptons, had walked in through the back door and come out the front door. Staley said in an interview he wanted to go back home.

Hepworth ordered Staley away from the house, Kleibecker said.

"At one point, Mr. Staley was standing near the front door, and Officer Hepworth put him in what he described as a wrist lock (where pressure is applied to gain compliance). He walked Mr. Staley from the front door, down off the stoop and down the sidewalk in front of the garage door, and then let go of him," Kleibecker said.

But their conversation continued, and Staley was told to: "Get out of the way and stay out of the way," Kleibecker said.

Hepworth also requested identification from Staley "on multiple occasions," Kleibecker said.

Staley provided his name and address, and said he was not carrying identification.

On the audio tape, "you can hear Mr. Staley, when the officer gives him a command, saying: 'Huh?'" Kleibecker said. The exchange continued and then escalated.

"Mr. Staley had his finger pointed toward the officer, who according to his own report felt threatened by Mr. Staley's action. He took hold of his wrist and put a handcuff on it," Kleibecker said.

"Mr. Staley started to pull away, saying: 'What are you doing this for?' At that point, the officer takes him right (down) to the driveway and fully handcuffs him," Kleibecker said.

Staley's hands were cuffed behind him. Neighbors who witnessed the incident said Hepworth "manhandled" the 94-year-old.

Hepworth had radioed that an officer needed assistance, according to Kleibecker. Central Dispatch then tried to contact Hepworth "on numerous occasions, and he did not respond," the director said.

Kleibecker said that, according to Hepworth's own report, when he started to see that Staley's arms were bleeding, he removed the handcuffs. Firefighters, who by then had arrived at the scene, started treatment to stop the bleeding.

Staley then was taken to a local hospital for treatment and released. He learned the next day that his elbow had been fractured.

Charter One Bank, Governor Granholm Announce Unprecedented Partnership to Spur Job Creation

Charter One's Job Creation Loan Program, a \$200 million low-interest fund, designed to create 5,000 new jobs in Michigan

DETROIT – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and Charter One Bank President & CEO Sandra E. Pierce today announced an unprecedented new partnership in which Charter One will offer \$200 million in loan funds at a very low interest rate to companies that commit to creating or expanding jobs in Michigan.

"This partnership with Charter One helps businesses grow in Michigan and helps Michigan grow jobs," Granholm said. "These loans are an important piece of my economic plan to create jobs and opportunities for Michigan citizens. Making sure that businesses have access to capital to grow is critical for stimulating the economy today, keeping the businesses and jobs we have and growing jobs and the economy for the future."

Charter One's job creation loans are designed to be an integral part of the Governor's comprehensive Jobs Today, Jobs Tomorrow economic plan for Michigan.

"Governor Granholm and Charter One share a strong commitment to developing programs that will help revitalize our economy and enrich the lives of Michigan residents," said Pierce. "Partnering with the state to create a loan pool for the specific purpose of creating jobs helps us deliver on this very important mission. We are proud to serve as a financial engine to help create 5,000 new jobs in Michigan."

The Charter One Job Creation Loan Program is the first of its kind in Michigan and is scheduled to be in operation over a two-year period. The new loan pool requires borrowers to create a minimum of one full-time job for every \$40,000 borrowed at the fixed interest rate of 4.99 percent (2.51 percent below today's prime rate) for the life of the loan. After 12 months, the offering rate for the program may be reset and would be available for any loan booked in the second year of the program.

The term of the loan will require that the specified jobs be created within three years after the funds are borrowed. The minimum loan size is \$1 million, and the maximum is \$10 million.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) will market the unique program to companies already in Michigan and those businesses considering relocating to the state. The agency will also conduct annual audits to certify that borrowers fulfill job creation commitments. In addition, MEDC and Charter One will partner closely with the economic development arms of the city of Detroit and Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

The loan program will be available to qualified borrowers starting immediately and will be serviced through Charter One offices located in twelve counties throughout Michigan, primarily Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb. Companies eligible for the program include any public or privately owned business in a broad array of industry sectors, including manufacturing, distribution centers, emerging sectors, and the 21st Century

Jobs Fund competitive-edge technologies: life sciences; alternative energy; advanced automotive, manufacturing and materials; and homeland security and defense.

Joining Governor Granholm and Pierce at today's announcement, held in the Governor's southeast Michigan offices, were city of Detroit Chief Administrative Officer Lucius Vassar, Wayne County Executive Robert A. Ficano, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, and Chairwoman Nancy White of Macomb County Board of Commissioners.

Companies interested in obtaining more information about the program can log on to www.michigan.org or e-mail medceconomic@michigan.org or contact the MEDC at 888-522-0103.

Charter One Bank, N.A., is a \$41 billion bank operating in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. It has more than 490 branches and 812 ATMs. It has 124 branches and 164 ATMs in Michigan. Charter One is a subsidiary of Citizens Financial Group, Inc., a \$148 billion commercial bank holding company headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island. Citizens has more than 1,600 branches, approximately 3,100 ATMs, and more than 27,000 employees in a 13-state retail branch network and non-branch offices in more than 30 states. Citizens is the eighth-largest commercial banking company in the United States ranked by deposits. Citizens is owned by RBS (The Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc). The Charter One Website is charterone.com.

'Fortune' seeker is a good sport, too

By MIKE HUGHES

Lansing State Journal

Under the glare of TV lights, it's tough to know everything.

Paul Onan of Lansing learned that during his "Wheel of Fortune" appearance, which airs Friday.

"I told them my son's name wrong," Onan said. "And I tried to buy a vowel when I didn't have any money."

In other circumstances, Onan, 38, is on top of these things. He's an accountant for the state; he knows that his wife is Ann, his kids are Sam and Lizzie and you can't buy something without money.

He also knows approximately everything about sports. Two years ago, he won a radio contest

Tricky wheel 2/23

► "Wheel of Fortune" airs at 7 p.m. weekdays on Channel 10. Paul Onan of Lansing is a contestant Friday.

on WQTX-FM (92.1) and was named Lansing's best sports fan. He won a trip to see Michigan State University's football team lose in Hawaii.

Continuing this good fortune, he went to the "Wheel" Web site (www.wheeloffortune.com) and filled out an application.

Then 100 people were invited to Detroit tryouts, he said, and 15 or 20 were chosen as contestants.

Onan's show was taped in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. He and Ann enjoyed a brief vacation; then it was time for the game: "The con-

stant consultant was telling us all day long what to do."

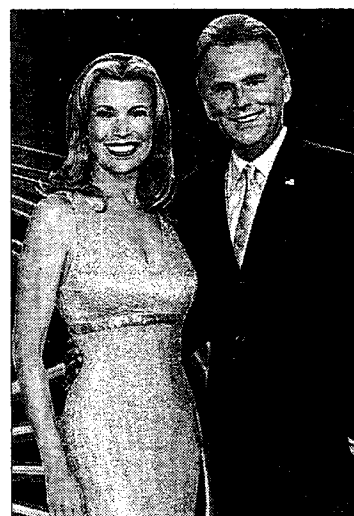
He yelled out letters enthusiastically, as instructed. He solved a couple of the secret phrases, but not the ones that mattered most.

Onan grants that he blew a chance to solve the final puzzle. "I knew the solution, but after it was too late. ... People are going to be teasing me about that."

They also may notice when he tells host Pat Sajak that he has "a son, Ann."

Still, Onan is open to being teased; he plans to watch the show with friends and colleagues at Tripper's in Frandor.

There, people can mock if they must. Just remember that he got some puzzles right and he knows a lot about sports.



Sony Pictures Television

Puzzle pair: Pat Sajak and Vanna White host the syndicated game show "Wheel of Fortune."



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

Media Advisory

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Wayne County collaborative receives \$150,000 Great Start Collaborative grant

WHAT: Ceremonial check presentation for grant to Wayne County collaborative from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC).

The \$150,000 grant will be used to support the local Great Start Collaborative, bringing together the public, private and non-profit sectors to develop a long-standing, sustained focus on early childhood development and care.

WHEN: Friday, February 24, 2006
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Wayne RESA
Boyd's Auditorium (second floor)
33500 Van Born Road
Wayne, MI 48184

WHO: Speakers at this event include:
Marianne Udow, DHS director and ECIC board member
Mike Foley, chief operating officer, ECIC
Dr. Marlene E. Davis, Wayne RESA Superintendent
Carol Goss, Skillman Foundation
John Colina, president, Colina Foundation and chair of Wayne County Collaborative
Local legislators invited

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